



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Inside this issue:

USDA Wins "Feds Feed Families" Honor	2
2011 FedView Highlights	3
Telework at USDA	4-5
USDA at the Blacks in Government Conference	6
Vets Find Unexpected Opportunities at	8
AgLearn: A Cultural Transformation Resource	9
Employee Spotlight: Ben Battle	11

MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 2, Issue 1

October 2011

A Message from Secretary Tom Vilsack

This is a busy time at the Department. I know that many of you are hard at work on a host of new and continuing projects in addition to the demands of your day-to-day responsibilities. So I want to thank you for taking time out to read about some of the important work going on across the country to strengthen this Department and make us more effective in our service to the American people. And I wanted to update you on just a few of the interesting efforts that have involved thousands of USDA employees over the past months.

As I wrote in an email earlier this month, USDA was recently recognized by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for our generosity during the 2011 Feds Feed Families campaign. At its award ceremony held at the Pentagon, OPM thanked USDA for collecting the [most food out of any large department](#) and also for collecting the most food during the month of August (we collected nearly 1.4 million pounds of food). We also had more donations per employee than any other department, almost 15 pounds of food donated per person. Our [collection totals by state](#) and our totals by [office food drive](#) are now available. The office totals included only non-perishable food donations.

But rather than focus on just the sheer amount of food collected, much of the impact of this food drive has come from the relationships built by employees who have partnered with their communities. Stories like the group of USDA employees in New Jersey who partnered with a local farmer

and non-profit organization to [glean](#) 11,000 pounds of vegetables from the fields. Or the story of the NASS field office in Tennessee that donated over 3,000 pounds of food and visited their local food bank to see where the donations were going. We've been highlighting some of these stories on the [USDA blog](#). I know that so many of you have similar stories to share of relationships built to serve those in need.

Another important email I sent you recently asked for your help with plain writing at USDA. Writing in plain, easy to understand language is an important way for us to help better serve the American people. Plain language makes it easier for the public to get the most from our many critical programs and will save us money too.

Using plain writing is indispensable to achieving our goals of providing first-class customer service and ensuring access to our programs. When we avoid jargon and excessive acronyms, customers that are new to USDA are more likely to have a positive experience. And when we avoid obscurity and ambiguity, we demonstrate our commitment to serving all Americans, including those who have had trouble accessing our programs in the past. This past summer, USDA published our [Plain Writing Compliance Report](#) to ensure compliance. It went into effect October 13, 2011. Through the USDA Plain Language working group,



each agency has begun identifying covered documents and providing training and resources to employees. Visit our [Plain Language web page](#) to learn more.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, I encourage you to watch [this video](#) I recorded a few weeks ago to learn more about our Strengthening Service initiative to improve USDA and the services we provide the American people. As we deal with uncertainties about the Federal budget, I want USDA to control its own future as much as possible.

The work we do is critical to the economy and to the well-being of the nation. I want us to make sure, particularly in these difficult times, that we are looking for opportunities to improve USDA and the service we provide to the American people. I know I can count on you to do your best to make that happen.

You can contact the staff of My USDA via email at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

USDA Gives 1.8 Million Pounds of Food to Feds Feed Families

“Due to the commitment of employees at every level across the country, we were able to more than triple the amount that we contributed to last year’s campaign.”

**—Chief Human Capital Officer
William P. Milton, Jr.**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture donated 1,791,393 pounds of non-perishable food items during the government-wide 2011 Feds Feed Families Campaign.

USDA and the Department of Defense (DOD) co-chaired the food drive, which included more than 40 agencies. Only DOD topped USDA’s donations, giving 2,004,613 pounds. All

the other federal agencies, together, donated 1,997,440 pounds.

Chief Human Capital Officer William P. Milton, Jr. says the campaign is especially meaningful to our employees.

“In USDA, this is an effort that is close to our hearts. Due to the commitment of employees at every level across the country, we were able to more than

triple the amount that we contributed to last year’s campaign. More important to us than winning the competition this year, is the result that we provided more food banks with the resources they need to serve children and families who might otherwise have gone hungry during the critical summer months. “

This is the third, and most successful, year for the Feds Feed Families campaign.



The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Chief Human Capital Officer Council announced that federal employees donated 5,793,446 pounds of nonperishable food items for the Feds Feed Families 2011 summer food drive. **ABOVE** (from left to right) are Pat Tamburrino (CHCO, DOD), William P. Milton, Jr. (CHCO, USDA), Kathryn Medina (Executive Director, CHCO Council), John Berry (Director, OPM), Lynn Brantley (CEO, Capital Area Food Bank), Mike Kane (CHCO, DOE) and Rita Franklin (Deputy CHCO, DOE).

RIGHT Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry (left) presents the award to Feds Feed Families Chair Max Finberg, USDA’s Faith-Based Director (center), and to Lead Champion Toby Osherson, USDA’s Deputy Chief White House Liaison (right).

USOPM Photos By: Timothy Grant 09/21/2011



feds **feed** families

Preliminary 2011 FedView Results Announced

The results of the [2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey \(FedView\)](#) have been released to all agencies.

FedView focuses on [employee perceptions of critical areas](#) which drive job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

While [all the results are still being analyzed](#), USDA is able to release preliminary results. More detailed reports will be made available when they are completed.

This survey is administered government-wide on an annual basis by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to help agencies measure how well they are doing at becoming a model employer.

The questions cover a variety of issues, including leadership, talent management, work life

balance, and alignment between the work employees do and the agency's mission.

An initial look at the scores shows that USDA improved in a number of areas. For example, the results show that the greatest change between the 2010 results and this year's results is in employee satisfaction with Telework. Due to the Telework Enhancement Act, a Departmental Regulation on Telework, and training for supervisors on the effective use of Telework, more USDA employees are taking advantage of this program that promotes work life balance and enhances productivity.

More USDA employees also indicated that they are being treated with respect by their supervisors. They are constantly looking for better ways to get the job done, and they have a greater understanding of

how their work relates to the agency's goals and priorities.

These results, and many other improvements indicated by the survey, are encouraging. They show that Cultural Transformation is making a difference for all of us. Still, we must aim even higher. Employee feedback and satisfaction are critical to generate the high performance USDA's customers deserve and need.

More detailed results will be shared soon, but a few of the highlights are below. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) has the lead for developing a plan to identify the areas to be targeted for improvement. OHRM is working with agency leaders, supervisors and managers from across the Department to take the FedView results and proactively respond to them.

**2011
FedView
The results
show that the
greatest change
between last
year and this
year is in
employee
satisfaction
with Telework,
which increased
from
34% to 40%.**

Highlights from USDA's 2011 FedView Responses

[OPM conducted the FedView Survey in April/May 2011.](#) It was administered electronically and a paper version was provided to a random sample of employees without internet access.

The survey included 84 items plus 11 demographic questions. The survey results represent a snapshot in time of the perceptions of the Federal workforce.

Process improvement
I am constantly looking for ways to do my job better (91% positive, same as 2010).

Treating employees with dignity and respect

- My supervisor/team leader

treats me with respect (82% answered positively, compared to 80% in 2010. The government-wide average is 80%).

Work/Life balance

- My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues. (81% answered positively in 2011, up from 79% in 2010. The government-wide average is currently 77%).

Dedication to the USDA Mission

- When needed, I am willing to put in the extra effort to get the job done (97% answered yes, which is unchanged from 2010, so this response has remained strong despite a challenging budget year and fiscal restraints).

Items that increased the most from the 2010 survey

- How satisfied are you with Telework? (40% rated this item positively in 2011, up from 34% in 2010)
- The people I work with cooperate to get the job done. (76% rated this item positively in 2011, compared to 74% in 2010).

Note: OPM has indicated that a two-point change is significant.



TELEWORK AT USDA

By Mika J. Cross, USDA Work/Life and Wellness Program

Honoring National Work and Family Month



October National Work & Family Month

National Work and Family Month occurs each year in the month of October and provides annual recognition of the importance that Work/Life programs play in attracting, motivating and retaining top talent. Especially in these times of fiscal cuts and economic woes, USDA remains committed to its support for the workforce through its diverse offerings of work/life programs such as flexible work arrangements, leave programs, Telework, Employee Assistance

and Referral Programs, the Lactation Program and onsite Wellness initiatives.

Not only in October, but each and every day USDA is working to improve its ability to help employees achieve work/life balance in order to attain fulfillment and success in life's two most important priorities—career and family. This month especially, why not share your stories or testimonials about what USDA has done for you to support a flexible work environment that has helped you to foster work/life balance?

Visit the [Work/Life and Wellness](#) Community Page on USDA Connect to post a blog, contribute to a Member's Forum and network with other employees who are interested and committed to Work/Life and Wellness initiatives. You can also submit your photos and stories directly via email to Work-life@dm.usda.gov or to the MyUSDA staff at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov. By sharing your personal experiences you serve as a role model for others who may be faced with the same situations.

Tell Us Like It Is! Take time to take the

USDA Work/Life Survey

You can take the survey this month at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L5X7TXP>

You can use any computer to do the survey, and it just takes just a few minutes to complete!

“Balancing Work & Family Life” Webinar on Oct 26, 2011

Join us for a free **“Balancing Work and Family Life”** Webinar hosted by USDA's Employee Assistance and Work/Life and Wellness Programs and sponsored by WCTS and AgLearn on October 26th from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

You may register for this event via AgLearn and can choose to participate in a group setting/

conference or as an individual from your desktop. If you



would like to participate please send an email to: work-life@dm.usda.gov for details

and registration instructions.

AgLearn has also committed to offering USDA employees many free and valuable options to learn more about fostering Work/Life Balance—be sure to add to your knowledge this month and check out free training, books and “Quick Talks” videos on a variety of Work/Life topics!

USDA's Telework and Student Programs in the News

- [USDA Student Interns](#)
Washington Post, October 12, 2011
- [USDA Seeks 40% Telework by 2013](#)
Government Executive, October, 2011
- [Telework Best Practices: A Lesson from USDA](#),
Next Gov, October, 2011
- [USDA Makes Advances in Telework Program](#),
Federal Newsradio.com, October, 2011

USDA Telework Program Case Studies

- [APHIS Telework in July 2011](#)
Commuter Connections
- [USDA Telework in July 2011](#)
Commuter Connections
- [USDA “Excellence in Telework IT” in Sept 2011](#) Telework

Honoring National Work and Family Month

Employee Testimonial—Eric Schwarz

Meet Eric Schwarz, who is currently the Strategic Planner for the USDA Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program. Before coming to USDA in 2009, Eric taught 8th grade English Language Arts in rural South Texas along the US/Mexican Border, where he was born and raised. As a teacher, his at-risk students made the largest cognitive gains in their campus cohort. As the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) for his program, he has teleworked intermittently for USDA. This is his experience.

"This July, I received an urgent phone call from a relative asking me to come to Texas. My father, who at the time was on short term disability because of a back injury, was in rapidly deteriorating health, his 6'1" frame reduced to 105 pounds. I requested ten days of leave and returned to Texas to find a different man than the spirited father I last saw at Christmas. He was frail, immobile, and depressed. Three days into my visit, my father

was diagnosed with metastatic bone cancer that had spread to his back, hips, chest, and legs. Bone cancer, I learned, is one of the most painful and debilitating types of cancer. Less than a week later, his mobility had declined so severely that he went from walking independently to complete reliance on a walker.

Shortly after my father was released from the hospital for the second time in two weeks, I received word from USDA that I had been granted the use of advanced sick leave through the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For me, this meant I would not have to go into a leave without pay status to stay and help my father. He was assured a devoted care provider and more time with his son. For the first time in a month, I observed a distinctly positive and grateful response from my father, who is unmarried, lives alone, and has a small, diffused and, at times, unreliable, personal care net-

work. My ten day visit extended into two months, and I assumed the role of primary care provider, helping my father organize his home and affairs, working with doctors to manage his pain, treatment, surgeries, and chemotherapy.

Thanks to USDA's newly revamped Telework Program, I will soon be teleworking full-time from Texas to be closer to my father during the holidays, working remotely from office space generously provided by USDA-ARS facilities during the day and providing care for my father at night. In addition to telework, my alternate work schedule (AWS) allows me to take my father to the oncologist on Mondays, and I have been approved to participate in the leave donation program. I was 25 at the time of my father's diagnosis and employed with USDA for only two years and, as such, my leave was rapidly exhausted, and I began to borrow 12

weeks of advanced leave.

These circumstances are rarely expected, especially by someone my age, but through these Work/Life and Wellness Programs – teleworking, AWS, leave donation, and FMLA – I am able to spend precious time with my father and remain dedicated to public service and my career at USDA. This experience, while unfortunate, illustrates the positive outcomes of Cultural Transformation and USDA's commitment to positive workplace initiatives that enable and support the workforce and has reinvested my personal commitment to the Department."

Through USDA's Leave Donation Program, employees may voluntarily donate leave to fellow public servants like Eric. If you are faced with lose or use leave or you are a federal employee interested in donating leave, contact your leave transfer program coordinator to request a leave donor form (AD -1043 for USDA employees and OPM 630-B for all other Federal agencies).



Employee Testimonial— Dawn Keen

Meet Dawn Keen and her new baby. Dawn is an Agricultural Statistician for NASS and also a new mom. She has been with USDA for 9 years and has been able to make a successful transition back to work through the use of USDA's Lactation Room in the Whitten Building and the support from her leadership of USDA's Lactation Program. This is her experience.

"Having a child has been the most positive and rewarding experience in my life. However, leaving my child to return to work has been one of the most difficult



challenges, ever. I am so thankful to my department for mak-

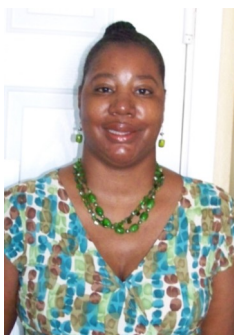


ing my transition easier by allowing me to care for my child while at work.

Being able to continue breast-feeding makes it feel as if I am contributing to meet his needs though I cannot be there with him. Thank you USDA for a wonderful facility. Thank you for providing the support needed for the continuation of breast-

feeding and, as for the big picture, thank you for the contribution to the health and future of new babies and for setting the example for other workplaces to follow."

Stay tuned for more stories and updates about USDA's Nursing Mothers Program.



By Yolanda
Kennedy-Edwards,
Agency Survey
Coordinator,
Food Safety and
Inspection Service,
Beltsville, MD

USDA Participates in 2011 Blacks In Government Conference

The message at this year's Blacks in Government (BIG) conference was about working together through diversity and inclusion. The keynote speakers all spoke about the progress the Federal government has made and the importance of moving forward with an inclusion mentality through training, workshops, and conferences like BIG.

The conference offered a variety of agency forums, training

and workshops covering career development/advancement, cultural diversity, leadership and management, communication skills, information technology, financial management, health awareness, personal effectiveness, and resource management with many of them offering continuing professional education credit (CPE), continuing education units (CEUs) or continuing professional learning points (CPLPs).

Attending this conference was truly an invaluable experience.

It offered training opportunities to enhance the performance of government employees at all levels in a variety of careers and positions as well as provided an opportunity for employees to learn more about what's going on in their agency. Attending future conferences like BIG will aid in reducing spending on training and will help us excel in our careers and our personal lives.

Associate Assistant
Secretary for
Administration
Dr. Alma Hobbs (right)
with United States
Forest Service Chief
Thomas Tidwell at the
2011 Blacks in
Government (BIG)
conference.



Environmental Cleanup Success at Beltsville Agricultural Research Center



Lisa Wilusz, Director of USDA's Office of Procurement and Property Management, was recently treated to a first-hand look at the environmental cleanup program at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). On Thursday, September 22, Ms. Wilusz and staff from the Environmental Management Division received a briefing and a tour from BARC and Agricultural Research Service staff of the various projects underway to address contaminated soil and ground water at BARC.

Historical activities at the facility are responsible for the contamination. In 1994, the Environmental Protection Agency listed BARC on its National Priorities List of the nation's most contaminated hazardous waste sites. BARC is USDA's sole National Priorities List Federal facility.

Pictured left to right are Babak Rastgoufard (OGC), Dana Jackson (BARC), Don Williams (BARC), Holly Fliniau (OPPM), Lisa Wilusz (OPPM), Dave Prevar (BARC), and Pete Jovanovich (ARS).

Diversity and Disabilities

In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness month this October, we recognize the skills that people with disabilities bring to our workforce, and we rededicate ourselves to improving employment opportunities for those living with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities remained nearly double the rate of people without disabilities. Reversing this trend is crucial, and we need your help.

Last year, President Obama issued an Executive Order (E.O.) to increase employment of individuals

with disabilities. USDA has taken a number of steps to meet these requirements. In April, USDA developed a strategic plan, aligned to the E.O., and submitted it to the Office of Personal Management and the Office of Management and Budget for review.

As part of our USDA Cultural Transformation, Secretary Tom Vilsack has included individuals with disabilities as part of our diversity efforts. He has issued hiring goals of interns and permanent employees with targeted and reportable disabilities that are regularly monitored

and reported monthly in the Cultural Transformation Milestones and Metrics Report. We can do better.

Less than one percent of our USDA workforce includes individuals with more severe or targeted disabilities, and just 6.2% are individuals who have reportable disabilities. To transform USDA culturally and to create a modern, inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of our nation, we expect to increase the employment of individuals with targeted disabilities to two percent, and those with reportable disabilities to eight percent during FY 2012.



By Alison Levy
USDA Disability
Employment
Program Manager

A cornerstone of our USDA Cultural Transformation effort is to increase employment of individuals with disabilities. This column includes information, resources, and success stories from throughout USDA that are being shared to support this initiative.

Reportable and Targeted Disabilities

Reportable disabilities are listed on the Self Identification of Disability form (Standard Form 256).

Targeted disabilities are those that have the lowest participation rate in Federal service. People with a targeted disability are a subset of those who have a reportable disability. There are nine categories of targeted disabilities.

- Deafness
- Blindness
- Missing extremities
- Partial paralysis
- Complete paralysis
- Convulsive disorders
- Psychiatric disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Distortion of limb and/or spine

Regardless of your job occupation or grade level, each USDA employee can make a contribution toward USDA achieving our goals of increasing individuals with disabilities in our workforce. Now is the time to make a personal commitment to check at least two items off the following "action list" beyond October and the remainder FY 2012.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness month

Save the Date!
Tuesday, December 6th
USDA Disability
Employment Forum
Bethesda, Maryland

All USDA agency contacts who work toward increasing employment of individuals with disabilities are invited.

Contact
Alison.Levy@dm.usda.gov
for more information.
Registration will open in late October.

portable disability: <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/index.aspx>.

Action List: Five Ways You Can Make a Difference!

1. **Each One, Reach One.** Mark your calendar to dedicate 30 minutes a month to providing information interviews to current and potential employees with disabilities. You can help an individual with a disability network for either a promotion or a new job opportunity with USDA.

2. **Hire One Student Intern with a Disability.** Visit the free [Federal Workforce Recruitment Program](#) site where a new class of pre-screened, rated, and interviewed students will be launched in December: www.wrp.gov.

3. **View a 5-Minute Introduction to Using Schedule A.** Visit this site for a free, 5-minute video about hiring individuals with disabilities using Schedule A: <http://golearn.gov/HiringReform/index.htm>.

4. **Hire One Permanent Employee with a Disability using Schedule A.** Recruit from the [OPM Shared List of Applicants with Disabilities \("Bender List"\)](#), a free online database of pre-screened applicants who are ready to work: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/SpEZIQ>. Also, talk with your local [Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#).

For a full list of contacts in each state, visit: <https://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902>.

5. **Confidentially Disclose Your Disability Status within the My Employee Page.** Approximately one in every seven Americans develops disability-related limitations before reaching retirement age. If your disability status has changed since joining the USDA workforce, now is your chance to be counted anonymously. Visit your ["My Employee Personal Page"](#) account using your eAuthentication (eAuth) login, and confidentially disclose a targeted or re-

Veterans Find Unexpected Opportunities at AMS

By Dave Trykowski, Director, Compliance, Safety and Security

When it comes time to transition from service in the military to a civilian job, many veterans

do not immediately think to look for positions at the USDA. There is an assumption that jobs with USDA are all farm-related—even those in the [Agricultural Market-](#)

[ing Service](#) (AMS). In reality, there is a wide variety of opportunities within AMS and USDA as a whole.

There are a number of [jobs at AMS](#) that overlap with different military specializations. The agency has [auditors](#) who evaluate programs to make sure producers follow international standards and practices. Positions in compliance and analysis, budget analysis, and information technology rely on skills like attention to detail and effective project management that are an essential part of armed services training.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army, my military background helped me transition smoothly into a career with the Federal government and specifically with AMS. I had less of a learning curve because of the training I received in the military, and I think that's true for many of the veterans that work at AMS.

AMS believes that the skills acquired while a member of the armed services—leadership, team work, and a strong work ethic—are perfect tools to help you succeed in a job within the agency. The fundamentals of leadership and team building learned in the military gives a solid foundation that can jump start anyone's career in the Federal government.

Because of its dedication to hiring veterans, AMS participates in a number of career fairs and events designed to connect employers with veterans. Fairs like the Naval Sea Systems Command's (NavSea) Wounded Warrior Career Fair at the Washington, DC Navy Yard gives AMS and dozens of other government agencies the

chance to talk about job opportunities with interested veterans. The [NavSea Wounded Warrior Program](#) is an organization dedicated to helping service-disabled veterans transition into civilian careers.

AMS also regularly attends career fairs and seminars held by [Operation Warfighter](#), a program run by the [Department of Defense](#) to help wounded service members gain valuable work experience.

We encourage all veterans to take a serious look at careers within AMS. Besides Operation Warfighter and the NavSea's Wounded Warrior Program, there are many programs, like the [Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation Program](#) and the [Army Career Alumni Program](#) (ACAP), that help service members and their families begin a career in the Federal government.

AMS will continue to partner with these organizations and welcome highly qualified veterans to our staff.



Lauren Hilliker (left) and Candice Spalding (right), both from the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, discuss career opportunities with veterans during the NavSea Wounded Warrior Career Fair.



Colleagues participate in an interactive exercise which stresses the importance of diversity.

“Walking Each Other Home” Workplace Diversity Training

Dozens of staff members from the Midwest Regional office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service participated in the *Walking Each Other Home* workplace diversity training last month.

USDA EEO trainers Vince Loran and Larry Kessler led the ambitious half-day Cultural Transformation course.

The goal of the training, which will be offered in FNS' seven regions as well as headquarters (Alexandria, VA), is to encourage employees to create a bridge, through curiosity and a willingness to be open to a world outside their own.

Instructors stressed how small acts of inclusion and putting yourself in someone else's

shoes can result in a more productive and comfortable workplace.

By the end of the day, relationships had strengthened, and everyone was a little more aware of the importance of diversity in the workplace.

FNS Observes Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated each October, recognizes the accomplishments of Latino Americans, both past and present. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service marked Hispanic Heritage Month by hosting a gathering on October 4 at its Alexandria, Virginia headquarters. The event, which underscored Cultural Transformation's goal to "embrace diversity and inclusion to improve performance," featured remarks by Lisa Pino, Deputy Administrator for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as a food tasting. Ms. Pino is the first Hispanic Deputy Administrator of SNAP, which is USDA's largest anti-hunger program.

Ms. Pino's comments focused on hunger issues through the lens of the Hispanic community. "Latinos in the U.S. are experiencing higher rates of poverty, hunger, obesity, and food insecurity. Forty percent of Latino children are overweight or obese, and a third live in poverty," said Pino. She discussed the Hispanic-focused FNS initiative, [La Mesa Completa](#), and efforts that the Agency is taking to incent more eligible Latinos to participate in programs including SNAP, the Women, Infant and Children's program, and the National School Lunch Program.

Before inviting attendees to sample the many delicious dishes that they brought to

share, including a rice and bean casserole, flan, and guacamole, Ms. Pino reminded everyone of the importance of both a good diet and exercise. She concluded her remarks by saying, "Our health is indeed everything" or "*Nuestra salud es todo.*"

Together, we can all play a part in encouraging all families and communities to embrace a healthier lifestyle. After all, like Mom says, our health is indeed everything, or "*Nuestra salud es todo.*"



Lisa Pino, Deputy Administrator for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



Dwaine Grismore, Frank McDonough, and Henry Bourgeois enjoy the festivities.

AgLearn Resources Support USDA's Cultural Transformation

Cultural Transformation is the process of creating a workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect and provided the opportunity for success. The USDA has embraced this idea and has been actively working toward transforming the Department.

A main goal of this initiative is "an inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and all employees are empowered to reach their full potential."

AgLearn is a USDA Department-wide resource that is helping to achieve this goal. The materials provided in AgLearn allow

employees to learn new skills, to improve their current skill set, and to formalize a learning plan that will allow them to reach their professional aspirations.

To further support USDA's Cultural Transformation initiative, a new tab highlighting several key courses has been added to the AgLearn "Welcome" page.

Courses such as Building Community, Dealing with Organizational Change, and Fundamentals of Cross-Cultural Communications, as well as others, are now available.

Be sure to regularly check AgLearn for courses that will allow you to support the USDA during this time of transformation!

As always, AgLearn resources are available at no cost to you!

Login >

Need an Account?
Sign Up Now.

Resource Center

+ Key Resources

+ Cultural Transformation **NEW!**

+ Certifications/Accreditations

+ cyberFEDS eLearning

+ IT Knowledge Centers

+ Business Knowledge Centers

+ Leadership Resources

+ Frequently Asked Questions

Download the AgLearn Poster Here.

aglearn+

USDA Cultural Transformation

AgLearn supports the Department's Cultural Transformation initiative. Please take the time to review the selected learning resources below that will help empower employees to reach their full potential.

> Building Community

Building Community Course

- > Building Improved Work Relationship
- > Dealing with Organizational Change
- > Fundamentals of Cross-cultural Communications
- > Interpersonal Communication
- > Managing Organizational Change
- > Negotiation Essentials
- > Optimizing Your Work/Life Balance



ABOVE: MARO employee Theresa Woodman adds her donations to the MARO school supply drive.

RIGHT: MARO staffers load a van with boxes of supplies headed to the Trenton, New Jersey Area Soup Kitchen.

Community Service and Outreach In Action

Staffers from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, based in Robbinsville, New Jersey, recently collected and donated backpacks, crayons, folders, notebooks, and pens to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) in an effort to support the group's back-to-school drive.

The much-appreciated items were then distributed by TASK to

needy children in surrounding communities. This activity underscores MARO's commitment to community service and outreach, which are key pillars of Cultural Transformation.



MARO's school supply drive is just one of many charity events in which employees generously participate. For example, a winter coat drive is scheduled for November. According to MaryAnn Salvatore, a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program specialist, "We try to create fun activities that get folks out of their cubicles to get acquainted with people from other programs, while at the same time working on efforts that benefit our local community."

"It doesn't help anyone to hire people because they're different, and then marginalize them because they're not the same."

**~John Berry,
Director of the
Office of
Personnel
Management,
speaking on
September 28,
2011, about
the
importance of
having an
inclusive
Federal
workforce**

What Do You Think? A Letter to the Editor

I just want to commend everyone for the commitment and dedication shown in the Leaders of Tomorrow Program & the Summer Program.

I read "[MyUSDA: A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation](#)" for this month (September) and the articles were truly awesome.

The Beltsville Area Leaders of Tomorrow appear very encouraged.

When there are intelligent, inspirational and strong individuals guiding these young leaders in the right direction, that makes a difference.

It is also a great thing that Diversity is a main concern in this program.

Again, I enjoyed the articles and appreciate all the work performed.

Keep up the good work,

**Shirley C Green
Bolivar County, Mississippi
FSA**

Upcoming Special Emphasis Program Observances

- **Veterans Day Observance**
Thursday, November 10, 2011, at the Jefferson Auditorium
- **National American Indian Heritage Month Observance**
Wednesday, November 16, 2011, at the Jefferson Auditorium
- **Martin Luther King's Birthday Celebration**
Thursday, January 12, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium
- **Black History Observance**
Thursday, February 16, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium

All Observances are scheduled to begin at 10:00 a. m. (EST)

IF YOU'RE IN DC, ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR

Employee Spotlight: Ben Battle, Forest Service

Ben Battle, the Oconee Ranger District's new District Ranger, is an outstanding example of the effectiveness of the USDA Forest Service's Center of Excellence (COE) in Forestry at Alabama A&M University (AAMU). Started in 1993, the COE combines capacity building initiatives for forestry academic and research programs and includes the largest Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiative (MWSI) program at any of the 1890 Land Grant schools.

In 2002, the COE helped AAMU's Forestry program become the first and only SAF-accredited 4-year forestry program at an 1890 institution.

A native of Tuskegee, Alabama, Ben got a head start at as a rising freshman through a Forest Service-based Summer Apprenticeship Program. Once on campus, he was accepted into the Forest Service's Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) through the

MWSI, which pays for school tuition and provides for both summer internships at various field locations in the Forest Service and a career position in the agency following graduation.

Since graduating in 2000, Ben has proven himself a real asset to the Forest Service. Ben's first job with the agency was on the Carson National Forest in Taos, NM, where he was responsible for inventory and monitoring work critical to Northern Goshawk habitat restoration. From there, he returned to AAMU for his M.S. in Wildlife Management. For his research, funded through a Forest Service, Southern Research Station cooperative agreement, he studied landscape-level habitat attributes for endangered bat species (Indiana and Grey bats) on the Bankhead National Forest (NF) in Alabama.

After graduating, he returned to the Forest Service serving as

an Assistant Recreation Program Manager on the Ocala NF in Florida, a Forester Trainee on the Talladega NF, and a Resource Assistant Ranger on the Conecuh NF in Alabama. Ben also served as a Deputy District Ranger on the Ozark-St. Francis NF in Arkansas.

Earlier this year, he was named District Ranger for the Oconee Ranger District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest in Georgia.

Ben attributes much of his early success to the MWSI program at AAMU. "The MWSI program was very instrumental in setting me on a path to have a successful career," says Ben, "I was given the opportunity to gain invaluable life and work experience during summer internship—experiences which still serve me to this very day. There is no doubt in my mind that my life would be very different had I not been affiliated with the MWSI program."



**"The
Multicultural
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career."
—District Ranger
Ben Battle**

Promoting Dignity, Inclusion, and Worth

As part of its Diversity Speaker Series, the Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Civil Rights sponsored a dynamic workshop, *Prejudice, Perception and Stereotypes: How They Affect the Workplace* on August 18, 2011.

Oliver Allen, Jr., Equal Employment Officer for the Drug Enforcement Administration, was the featured speaker.

Mr. Allen discussed how various forms of prejudice can negatively impact judgment, hinder relationships, and compromise workplace success.

Mr. Allen also engaged participants through a series of individual and group exercises which tested their cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values.

The session was very well received by attendees and reinforced FNS' commitment to embrace diversity and inclusion to improve performance. FNS plans to host similar events in the coming months.



Oliver Allen, Jr.,
Equal Employment
Officer for the
Drug Enforcement
Administration

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of worklife at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).

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